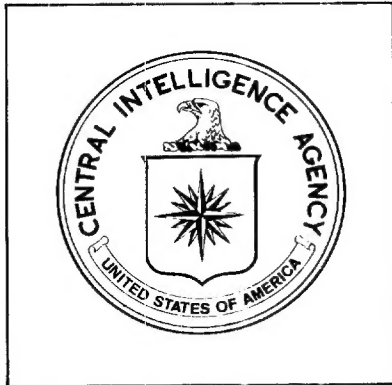


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Egypt

*Succession*

In a recent Beirut magazine interview, President Sadat called attention to a widely misunderstood provision of the Egyptian constitution on the presidential succession. His clarification and subsequent remarks give added significance to his recent appointment of former air force commander Husni Mubarak as vice president.

According to the constitution, upon the death or incapacitation of the president, the speaker of the People's Assembly succeeds to the office temporarily. The assembly then selects a nominee for permanent president, whose name is submitted to a nationwide referendum for final popular approval.

The present speaker, Sayyid Mari, a close confidant of Sadat, has been widely assumed to be Sadat's personal choice as his successor, on the theory that Mari would have the inside track with the assembly if it were ever in a position to select a presidential nominee. When questioned by the interviewer on this point, however, Sadat noted that the constitution stipulates that the assembly speaker is not in these circumstances eligible for nomination.

There is no clear-cut constitutional impediment to Mari's placing himself in the running in the event of a normal transfer of power in a regularly scheduled election, but Sadat seemed to endorse Vice President Mubarak when the interviewer pursued the question of successors. Asked if Mubarak were his choice to succeed, Sadat noted that the choice is in the hands of the Egyptian people but said "I try to place sound options before the people."

Since his unexpected appointment of Mubarak to the vice presidency last month, Sadat has involved the former general heavily in affairs of state. A

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career military officer, Mubarak is new to the political arena, and Sadat seems to be deliberately giving him wide exposure to broaden his experience. Mubarak has in the last month traveled with or on behalf of Sadat to several Arab states, and he will accompany Sadat on the president's trip to Salzburg to meet with President Ford early next month.

Mubarak served as air force commander for three years before his appointment as vice president. He began his career in the early 1950s as a fighter pilot. After several training stints in the Soviet Union, he served as a bomber wing commander. In the years after 1967, he progressed up the ladder to airbase commander and then air force chief of staff before becoming air force commander. Mubarak is 47 and has been hailed by Sadat as a representative of the younger generation that proved itself during the 1973 war and is now ready to move into positions of leadership.

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West Africa*Lagos Summit to Launch  
New Régional Community*

General Gowon has invited the heads of 14 west African states to meet with him early next week in Lagos to sign a treaty setting up a new Economic Community of West African States. The summit is the culmination of a three-year diplomatic effort by Nigeria, in partnership with French-speaking Togo, to sell the idea of a broad economic community in west Africa that cuts across language and other barriers.

Gowon has high hopes that all of west Africa's French-speaking and English-speaking countries as well as Guinea-Bissau, a former Portuguese territory, will join the new community. The creation of such an organization would enhance his image as an African statesman and Nigeria's leadership role in west Africa.

Although a draft treaty for such a grouping won unanimous approval at a ministerial-level meeting last January in Liberia, west African leaders still harbor varying degrees of enthusiasm for the proposed community and it is unclear how many of them will actually sign the treaty. The signatures of seven heads of state are required to bring the draft treaty into effect. If some of the African leaders are unwilling to commit themselves at the Lagos meeting, the Nigerians maintain that they will push ahead with a smaller grouping, leaving the door open for other countries to join later.

Several past attempts by west African leaders to form a large regional economic grouping have foundered. Wider cooperation has been stymied in part because some French-speaking states fear being swamped by Nigeria, by far the area's largest and strongest state. Their concern has been exploited by France, which has consistently feared that an inclusive regional organization might reduce its strong influence in French-speaking west Africa.

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The success of the Lagos summit depends on Gowon's ability to reach an accommodation with the heads of state who speak for a rival economic grouping of ex-French territories known as the West African Economic Community (CEAO). The members of this group are Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, Mauritania, Niger, and Ivory Coast. The group's prime mover and present head, Senegalese President Senghor, will be absent from Lagos on a visit to the US. He regards the franco-phone group as the most appropriate nucleus for building a wider economic community.

The heads of state of CEAO met last month to discuss their strategy at the Lagos meeting. They also adopted several measures aimed at projecting their three-year old organization--which exists largely on paper--as a viable alternative that has begun actual operation. This may not be enough to stave off possible defections to the Nigerian-sponsored community by one or more of the poorer French-speaking states. Dahomey and Niger, for example, already have important transport and trade ties with Nigeria, which because of its oil wealth, may seem to them to be the best partner to collaborate with on a regional basis.

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